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THE CRAYON.

VOL. I. NO. 14.

NEW YORK, APRIL 4, 1855.

\$3 PER ANNUM.

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PUPLICATION OFFICE, 237 BROADWAY, COR. OF PARK PLACE.

THE ARTIST AS TEACHER.

WE have repeatedly spoken of the function of the Artist as a Teacher, and perhaps it is as well, before we go further, that we should give some more explicit idea of our meaning in this expression, than we have heretofore given. And first, we must disclaim the position that Art is to take the chair of Science, and tell us simply of the facts of the outer world—that the meadow is studded with butter-cups, the rock covered with lichens, or that the clouds are divided into their classes, and have their laws of construction. This, botany and meteorology will tell us much more concisely, and if Art do no more it is nothing nobler than the photograph.

We need to be told these things constantly, for though we imagine that because we open our eyes we see all that is before them, the watchful man finds himself ever discovering something new in the most familiar things. Very few of us could tell wherein the fractures of slate differ from those of gneiss, or the leaf of the maple from that of the oak. We may have been looking at the sky for a quarter of a century, and not have learned that its clouds are classified. We could tell slate from gneiss when we see it, or a maple tree from an oak, and five minutes after, if questioned, not be able to say where was the difference by which we distinguished them. We are not acquainted with their characteristics *i. e.* we lack Science, which would impress these things on us by its laws.

But the painter may know all these things and still be only a botanist or geologist in his feeling. In this case he would, as an Artist, teach us nothing, but would simply remind us of that which science had first informed us of, or if he told us anything new, it would be no more than a scientific fact. The Artist must know all these things, since on this positive truth all Art is based; but he must go beyond this in order to teach us anything as Artist. He must pass from the merely actual into the ideal of Nature, and not only tell us that flowers exist, but that there is a perfect type of the flower, more fully beautiful than any which we see—free from all imperfection of accident and circumstance. It was for this that his sense of beauty was made keener than another's, that he might

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feel more sensitively the degrees of beauty, and so approach the perfect ideal. He, by his life's labor, must develop the highest forms of beauty, which we only feebly and dimly discover. From the rude and imperfectly developed forms of Nature he draws, by her own indication, that which is divine. Thus Raphael, by his artistic inspiration, from the passion-stained faces around him, brought out that which, with us, stands as the purely heavenly, and we justly call him Sanzio, who thus made holy that which he found sin-marked and deformed.

This is but one of the forms in which the ideal calls on the Artist to teach. Buonarrotti, in his marble types of power and majesty, and Titian, in his glow of harmonious color, were, equally, idealists; and the man who from the thousand qualities of Nature selects one, and drawing it from its concealing combinations presents it clear and single to the mind, gives us still his own ideality. A story is told of Turner, that when a lady once complained that she could not see in Nature the qualities which he had in his drawings, he replied, "No, madam, but do you not wish you could?" This was just, because Turner, instead of idly attempting to give all that Nature showed him, had wisely taken the particular quality he desired, and nothing else; and the fact that she did not see it in Nature, proved that she needed the instruction of his Art. Superficial observers generally imagine that they see all that is to be seen, while the man who has passed his half century in the closest study of Nature, knows that each return to her gives him some new insight.

How, then, shall we know whether the Artist teach us truly, and that it is not some vagary of a diseased mind which he gives us as a mystery of Nature? It is truly difficult, since the visions of the most highly illumined minds are so nearly, in their first appearance, like the ravings of insanity, that the world often mistakes the one for the other. But, if the Artist has first based himself on that science which we, equally with himself, can comprehend and judge—if he has laboriously and conscientiously passed through the actual, and shown us by his humility at the threshold that he was worthy to enter into the inner

temple—if he has been earnest, conscientious and clear-sighted where we could follow him, we may fearlessly follow him, also, where he can see and we cannot. The humble, reverent, student of Nature is alone fit to become the master in Art.

But let us, in all our being taught, not forget that we see Nature through Art—never letting our vision rest satisfied with the work of the Artist until we have learned to see its prototype in Nature. Let not the priest stand for the religion. That which Art points out to us is not our own until we have confirmed the indication by our own observation. Before that it is *information*; after—*knowledge*.

Letters

ON LANDSCAPE PAINTING.

NO. VI.

IN my last I threw out some hints on atmospheric gradation. It was there stated, as a principle, that this gradation was most apparent and invariable in the darks or shaded portions of the landscape, under a clear sky, such portions partaking more and more the color of the sky as they recede. The natural cause for this effect is the same as that which produces the blue of the sky—the intervention of the great body of atmosphere between the earth, and the utter darkness of surrounding space. A luminous, transparent white, spread over black, becomes blue in proportion to its purity; and, as the atmosphere is less pure near the earth, so the sky is less blue at the horizon, thence gradually increasing to the zenith. The blueness of the distant mountain and the intermediate gradation, are subject to this law.

It was also stated, in my last letter, that this regular gradation was interrupted, and the effect of atmosphere complicated, by the intervention of clouds and other vapors; but, previous to an examination of such phenomena, let us take into consideration the influence of sunlight.

Sunshine is the joyous expression of Nature, the lovely smile that lights up all her beauty, so changing and adorning all it rests upon, as to seem itself creative. Mingling with the fitful humors of the atmosphere, it develops the full power of color, and evolves the interminable variety of light and shade which constitutes the magic of chiaroscuro—that controlling element of effect which theorists have in vain endeavored to portion and systemize. Who does not feel that existence is a blessing and the world beautiful, when, after tedious days of sullen cloud and storm, and worse monotonous drizzle, suddenly the

sun breaks forth in noon-day splendor? So gladdening is his presence, that we forget at once the long gloom of his absence. And who, so well as the landscape artist, can appreciate such a change? And, having so often enjoyed its blessing, he would be most ungrateful and unworthy not to bear witness by his works to its surpassing loveliness. I have more respect for the devout heathen who worships the sun as the visible Divinity, than for the artist whose pictures betray insensibility to the charm of sunlight.

It is first declared by light and shade, but its full expression depends on color. Simple light may be represented without color, but sunshine never. Preparatory, therefore, to the few hints I shall give towards the representation of sunlight, I will call your attention to the general classification of the colors into the three divisions of warm, cold, and neutral. Reds and yellows form the basis of all warm color, and blue that of the cold—an equal admixture of the three forms the neutral. This division will serve our present purpose. And we learn from it that the color of sunlight is either red or yellow, or compounded of both, being warm, and that its absence or shade must present a predominance of blue, expressive of its coldness. And, however, little of positiveness may appear in these elements, either in the light or shade, there will always exist the marked distinction of warmth and coolness when compared. This is an invariable principle, or, if there be any exceptions, it is traceable to adventitious causes, such as those of strong reflections, which will be considered as we proceed.

All warm colors are enhanced or become more positive in sunlight, and all cold color loses something of its identity by the infusion of warmth; in other words, it has affinity for the warm, and antipathy for cold; it is, therefore, important to keep in view the quality of the color on which it falls.

The best time to observe the ordinary effect of sunshine on the landscape, is to watch the gradual clearing up of a cloudy day, when its presence is first announced by occasional patches of light. The first sensation conveyed is, of course, that of light—the next, that of color; the entire mass of such light being warm compared with the surrounding shade. Study the effect, first, in the middle distance, when a cloudy sky just begins to open and lets its first burst of sunlight in. You will find that around the light the shadow appears cooler, owing to the suddenness of contrast; but, as the openings overhead widen, the cold light from the clear blue sky is reflected into the shadow, and the entire mass of it becomes colder even to a greater degree than the unpracticed eye readily admits. So, if you should paint the scene with the utmost truth during a cloudy day, and afterwards introduce these patches of sunlight, the picture would be entirely false.

Your shadows would not only be too warm and positive in local color, but all forms within them too defined, inasmuch as sunlight always obscures the details of the adjoining shadows according to their magnitude—those of the broader masses remaining most distinct. The amount of warm color in sunshine is regulated by the hour of the day, and condition of the at-

mosphere, ordinarily the least at noon. Generally it contains more of yellow than red, but at times assuming every grade of golden orange and crimson, so that all attempts at any specific prescription must ever remain inadequate, whether artistic or scientific, and only useful so far as to direct the student, or even force him to entire reliance on his own powers of observation "under the open sky." For which end, I have assumed the task of advising you.

You will further observe, that all shadows cast from objects in direct sunlight have their edges sharply defined and strongest at their starting point (when no reflection is present). This is the first distinguishing difference between sunshine and ordinary daylight, under a cloudy sky. Any softening or blending of such shadow with the light must impair, if not destroy, its reality. Be careful to note the direction, length and breadth of shadows, according to the rules of perspective, and their adaptation to the surface on which they rest. And that all broad masses from clouds or other large bodies, are weaker than those of smaller dimensions, embracing, as they do, a greater amount of reflections from the sky and surrounding objects.

I have referred you to middle grounds and distance the better to discern the influence of sunlight, in reference to the color of shadows; but the same principles operate in foreground, though less palpable in this particular. You have here the contrasts of light and dark, warmth and coolness of color, the same sharpness of edges* and reflections from the sky, less influenced by the atmosphere, but still perceptible, and a proportionate indistinctness of detail, regulated by the magnitude of the shadow. In addition to these you find another agency employed of great value, that is, the force of strong reflections from contiguous objects at times materially affecting the quality of the color of the shadow. Whenever the sun's rays strike an object within the margin of a shadow, according as that object is elevated above the plane of the shadow, it will reflect those rays modified by its own color and peculiar surface, into the ground of the shadow, often giving positive warmth to its coolness, thus becoming the exception above mentioned to the principle I have laid down; so that when such shadow is very circumscribed, it becomes warm throughout, and even hot where the reflecting cause is very warm and glowing in color. The same action takes place to a limited extent, in more distant localities, though less conspicuous, as in the ravine of the middle ground, with its sunny and shaded sides, and the steep slopes of more distant elevations. In the midst of sunlight and its shadows, look out then for the sly agents of reflection, for ever meddling with the sports of sunshine, whether among the pebbles by the brook-side, or the precipices of the mountain.

We are not liable to over-estimate the

* Sharpness of the edges, or terminations of all foreground shadows, is, of course, dependent on the solidity or openness of the extremities of the object casting it. And all cloud shadows approaching the foreground, have soft terminations, so far differing from those of the distance; so the edges will be soft and the mass weak, in proportion to the remoteness of the object which cast it from the ground on which it falls, as those of hills or mountains, when such shadows cross the near middle ground

value of sunshine to the landscape. By it all beauty is rendered more beautiful, and the ungainly made attractive. Color, as we have seen, is dependent on it for its highest development, and chiaroscuro for its greatest charm. But, independent of its pictorial efficacy, it imparts a cheerful sentiment to the picture that all observers feel and enjoy; even the fearful darkness of storm and tempest is palliated and becomes agreeable, if but a gleam of sunshine enliven some corner of the scene; and, as it glides through the woven arches of the solemn forest, touching here and there some mossy trunk and pendant bough, and chequering the rich mould beneath with variegated gems, it cheers the silent gloom, and surprises us with the sudden presence of unlooked-for beauty.

The common prejudice against green landscapes seems to me to arise from the neglect of studying the effect of sunlight in varying the green, and as this is a prejudice as general among artists as injurious to our true perception of nature, I will give some space to the consideration of this part of our subject.

In consequence of the prevalence of green in our summer landscape, the presence of sunlight becomes indispensable as the best means to counteract monotony. For Nature, indeed, abhors monotony as she does a vacuum, and perhaps it is to this feature above all others that we may ascribe the unpleasantness of a dull, cloudy day. I am inclined to believe that sleep would ensue from the contemplation of a surrounding mass of unvaried color, as soon as from the most somnolent monotony of sound or motion. In form, light and dark, and especially in color it is repulsive, and only admissible in the picture when necessary to the expression of a particular sentiment. But Nature, in this, as in all other cases, provides for the emergency. She is not only, generally, sparing in the employment of all strong positive color, but never permits a large unvaried mass of any single color. The local green of foliage, grass and plants, varies perpetually according to species and locality—tints of every shade, with mosses and lichens, diversify the surface of rocks—mineral and vegetable dyes mottle the bare earth, while water, in its transparency, mobility and mimic reflections, appropriating to itself the diversity of all; where, then, shall we look for monotony? Surely not in the sky, whose vault of graduated blue is for ever changing, and in whose realm of clouds not even its semblance is permitted to enter.

I am free to confess, that my perception of Nature's beauty is not sufficiently sensitive to be wounded by the sunny green of summer—I cannot persuade myself that it is not beautiful, being, as it is, the first witness of organic life in the creation, the universal sign of unimpeded and healthy action; and, above all, the chosen color of creative Love for the earth's chief decoration. But I can well understand why it has been denounced by the Artist—it is the difficulty of its truthful representation—for it appears to me that no other color is attended with equal embarrassments. I am persuaded, therefore, that the prejudice against green pictures, or rather the supposed impracticability of all efforts to render them pleasing, arises more from failure to represent their greenness truly, than

from any inherent objection. Who will assert that the fresh green of summer is not beautiful? ever grateful to the sight, and soothing to the mind—the poet delights to revel in it, and the dusty eyes of the tired citizen regards it as a Godsend whenever permitted to enjoy it! Then why should the picture which represents it, be looked on as offensive? Alas, for the conventionalisms of Art!

If you paint a vast forest or extensive plains with one unvaried shade of green, it will indeed be repulsive, for Nature never does that: if you add to this the natural diversity of form and texture, with even truth of sunlight, you will still fall short of the mark; for, besides this, Nature has so varied her greens with an infinity of different shades, almost every tree even of the same kind differing from each other, that strictly speaking there is no monotony in her forests, and the same variety exists in the surface of her green fields—in the hues of the various grasses, and the tinting of numerous flowers.

But, notwithstanding this variety, large masses of green forests or extensive plains may be thought objectionable, from the requirement of a preponderance of green in your picture, thereby tending to dullness, but let the golden sunshine fall on given portions, and the sea of emerald will at once become redolent with life and beauty, and in proportion to the true expression of the light, especially in relation to the variety of local tints within it, and accompanied by a suitable use of cloud-shadows, all objectionable monotony and undue preponderance of positive green, will at once disappear—still more will this be the result when occurring under the condition of a soft atmosphere, neutralizing more sensibly the greenness of the receding part.

The chief difficulty in the management of green is found in the painting of trees, and on this point I desire to make a few more remarks. We find no green thing in Nature of sufficient magnitude to be conspicuous that has not inequality of surface, or that is not so fashioned as to prevent anything like an equal distribution of light at the same time over its entire surface. The leaves of all large plants are waving or undulating, or multifarious in structure. And the tree, the largest and most abundant of all objects that bear the color, is most varied by irregularities of all shapes and dimensions; loosely composed in all its parts, and textured in every degree of depression and projection, the entire surface is a labyrinth of inequalities, so that it would appear a special provision of Nature to guard against the remotest liability to sameness or monotony of color on its surface, either singly observed, or when grouped in the mighty forest.

For this inequality and looseness of surface, with its irregularly rounded form, precludes the possibility of exposure to the same angle, and more especially to the reception of an equal quantity of light at the same time, on any considerable portion, and every variation in this respect presents a difference of color or varying shade of its green; so that on close examination you will find that the green proper, or actual color of the tree, is confined to the central portion of the light side where the sunshine falls, and all the rest is more or less negated, the shaded side, as a mass, scarcely green at all.

This results from the looseness of structure, for it would be much more green were it a solid object, because the sun's rays penetrate its substance, and some portions of them pass to the opposite extremity, as I have previously reminded you. This neutrality of the shade is explained by the law which governs the color of light in its passage through semi-transparent bodies, becoming warmer and warmer, at first more orange, and as the medium becomes denser, finally red; for example, if you look at a leaf in sunlight you will find the upper, or side on which the light falls, a cool green, while the under side will be a warm green inclining to orange. This transmitted light, falling in its turn as direct light on still other leaves, is still further warmed by the same influence, and thus partially neutralizes the actual color of the foliage by mingling its opposing color with it.* Thus the shadows of a tree are more nearly neutral than those of a solid substance of the same color, and if represented as green will be at once false and consequently offensive.

Yours truly,

A. B. DURAND.

LINEAR PERSPECTIVE.

It is with Art, in some respects, as it is with religion; we must become as little children, before we are worthy to enter its kingdom.

There is so much to be taken on trust, so great faith necessary, that the more timidly its limits are approached, the more sure the promised reward of well-earned success.

As opposed to this spirit of meekness, however, there is prominent what might not inaptly be termed a love of the superficial; a heedless hastening forward to some end, regardless alike of the means as well as the consequences, the sole object being the attainment of a result, whether true or false, is alike unimportant. The ambition of many, whether artists or artisans, is, not to be thorough masters of their profession, but to be, as it were, in position; and it matters not how this is gained, either by purchase, by favor, or by good fortune. An ambition like this may be worthy a politician, but every lover of art will find such a prize the merest shadow.

There is a step-by-step advancement in Art we contend for, with which the "spirit of the age," to borrow a hackneyed phrase, is continually at war. Glare, strong effects, violent oppositions, in other words, a system of conventional untruth is abroad like a pestilence, and strong in head and heart are those who can resist its influence.

An hour passed in any public gallery of pictures, will convince one of the supremacy of this evil. False coloring, and inaccurate drawing, in both figure and landscape, are apparent at every turn.

In this connection, and as forming an important part of a knowledge of drawing, the study of Linear Perspective seems especially worthy of notice.

With its formulæ and theorems, and its multiplicity of lines, it seems stationed at the threshold of Art, rather to frown into discouragement the willing student, than to

* You may illustrate this further by letting a single ray of light into a close apartment, and then holding a thin sheet of some semi-transparent substance over the aperture. The light will receive a warm tinge, increasing in warmth with each layer of the substance added, until it finally becomes a deep red.—See *Gauche on Color*.

beckon him on to perseverance and success: but truth ever wears a serious face, till her favoring smiles are won by those who sincerely and lovingly worship at her altar.

This essential to the Art-student's education is almost totally neglected, and that, too, when without some acquaintance with its general rules, not even the simplest subject can be drawn with anything like certainty.

But it is in landscape drawing that its value is more directly felt. Here planes, as such, are more dealt with. Meadows and lakes, and even clouds and trees, are subservient to its never-deviating rules. Not that a cloud or tree, could be drawn with the rule and dividers, but simply that these objects can be reduced in some degree to the principle of planes. The under side of any large mass of clouds, for instance, how frequently we see it spreading away like a vast ceiling, and decreasing in strength of color precisely in the same ratio that it tends towards its vanishing point. The branches likewise of trees, spreading out with their myriads of leaves, each set forming a plane, or an approximation to one, under or over which you must look, as you have chosen your horizon.

An eminent American landscape painter, who is universally esteemed for the peculiar scenes he has made his own, is to all appearances unacquainted with the first rules of perspective. One of his pictures, and a favorite at the time, was painted with the horizon nearly halfway up the canvas, and the eye was led over a vast expanse of well-cultivated country, dotted here and there with farm-houses and barns all awry, though so unimportant in size as to be readily overlooked; but in the foreground ignorance told its own story. A well-painted building, a barn we think, was drawn with the top of the roof far below the horizon, yet the ceiling, the beams, and all the interior arrangements, were shown through the open doors, doubtless to the entire satisfaction of the artist, but to the great scandal of perspective. If we are not mistaken in a full-length portrait of Geo. III., by Gainsborough, an absurdity of this kind occurs, where, if the point of sight given be correct, his majesty is several thousand feet from the eye of the observer. Also in a print of the Duke of York, after Sir Joshua, a similar error is apparent. The apologists for this oversight, or blunder, explain it by saying that the spectator is supposed to be standing aside, as he is loyally bound to, when Majesty steps forth. But such an explanation is a quibble unworthy of notice. There is a grace beyond the rules of Art which some aim at, and under cover of such subterfuge the ignorant and the indifferent take shelter.

Perspective seems to have been known to the ancients, although the violation of some of its rules in works of Art might lead one to suppose an entire ignorance of it. In the decoration of ancient theatres, however, this branch of the Arts was extensively made use of. Pliny, if we may rely upon him, tells us that in the theatre of Claudius Pulcher (a Roman Consul at the time of the first Punic War, 264 B. C.); the imitations were so striking, that the birds attempted to light upon the roof